

CHAPTER 9

HISTORIC PRESERVATION

BASIS AND STRUCTURE

In recent years, a broad-based popular movement has evolved from the public's desire to know and embrace our national heritage, to conserve scenic views and landscapes, and to recognize that historic preservation is frequently associated with economic success. Historic preservation is the identification, evaluation, and protection of historic and archaeological resources so that they continue to play an integral, vibrant role in their communities. Many see the preservation of historic districts, sites, objects, structures, and buildings as enhancing their quality of life by adding variety and texture to the cultural landscape in which they live and work.

The Meadowlands District has historic resources dating from the initial human occupation of the region approximately 8,000 years ago. Unfortunately, these structures and sites from the past have often been easy to overlook because of the pace of new development. This chapter gives a brief account of significant resources in the District.

Numerous cultural resource surveys have been conducted within the District, with great variation in levels of coverage and investigation. Early studies of the Meadowlands were largely restricted to relatively small parcels of land or small segments of larger development tracts. Many of these studies were burdened by remnants of 19th century attitudes that viewed the Meadowlands as a static environment in need of reclamation, inhospitable by the standards of the day.

The original Master Plan, however, did not consider the historic resources of the District. The only such reference was to a "cultural complex" as part of the Berry's Creek Center concept, to include museums, art galleries, and facilities for the performing arts.

Consequently, the completion of a "Cultural Resource Reconnaissance" in 1989 gave the NJMC its first inventory of the District's historic and cultural areas. The 1992 "Stage 1A Archeological and Historical Sensitivity Evaluation of the Hackensack Meadowlands" built upon the former study by providing locations and distributions of previously identified cultural resources. The 1992 report also identified several previously overlooked resources and potential areas of archeological and historic sensitivity within the District. Additional resources were identified in the 1994 follow-up study, "Hackensack Meadowlands Archaeological and Historical Sensitivity and Impact Evaluation."

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EXISTING HISTORIC RESOURCES

Significant resources in the District are summarized in Figure 9.1 and appear on Map 13. The resource numbers on the map correspond to the numbers in the figure. These resources stand as primary symbols of the history of human settlement in the District. The resources were identified by the NJMC's inventories cited on the previous page, the Bergen County Historic Sites Survey of 1980-81, the Hudson County Master Plan, and the New Jersey State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO).

SHPO assists in identifying and preserving the State's historic and archaeological resources through its historic preservation programs. Among its functions, SHPO manages the New Jersey and National Registers of Historic Places and provides technical information and regulatory services focused on avoiding or mitigating adverse effects of public projects on historic resources. To identify historic resources, SHPO evaluates their significance and establishes priorities for designation and preservation. Resources must be significant in American history, architecture, archaeology, engineering or culture. They may be associated with persons or events that have contributed to the broad patterns of our history; embody the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction; or yield important prehistoric or historic information.

To date, SHPO has identified several District resources as having historic significance. The resources are listed in, or have SHPO opinions of eligibility for listing in, the New Jersey Register of Historic Places and/or the National Register of Historic Places (NJRHP/NRHP). The SHPO resources are summarized below, including the identifying numbers on Figure 9.1 and Map 13:

HX Drawbridge (No. 39)

Milepost 5.48, Bergen County Line, East Rutherford, Secaucus

SHPO determined eligible: 4/02/92

Significance: Completed in 1911, HX (Hackensack Crossing) is one of the first technically innovative "Heel Trunnion" bascule bridges built in the United States. The style was patented by Joseph B. Strauss, designer of the Golden Gate Bridge. Bascule bridges have sections called "leaves" that rotate upward and away from the centerline of the river, providing clear passage for river traffic. A bascule drawbridge is counterweighted to open easily, seesaw fashion ("Bascule" is derived from the French word for seesaw.). A trunnion is a hinge arrangement that takes its name from the pivot on which a cannon swivels up and down.

A simple bascule bridge has its counterweight below the deck and requires a lot of space underneath. The Heel Trunnion bascule bridge uses a linkage to put the counterweight above the deck and to keep it and the leaf in balance with one another as the center of gravity changes when the bridge opens. An engineering trade magazine reported at the time of the Heel Trunnion bridge's invention, "A type of bascule bridge with fixed trunnions and overhead counterweights has been developed recently in which the center of gravity of the whole structure does not move either vertically or horizontally as the bridge is being opened or closed. The foundations for this type of bridge are therefore simple and economical. Eight bridges of this type have been completed."

FIGURE 9.1 Historic Resources in the Meadowlands District			
No.	Resource	Address	Municipality
1	Outwater Cemetery	W. side Washington Ave./S. of Commerce Rd.	Carlstadt
2	Canadian Car & Foundry Company	East of Valley Brook & Polito avenues	Lyndhurst
3	Kingsland Railroad Repair Shops	S. of Valley Brook Ave., e. of Orient Way	Lyndhurst
4	(unnamed)	10 Berger Street	Moonachie
5	Phillip Mehrhof House	29 Riverside Avenue (Mehrhof Lane)	Little Ferry
6	Ferry Landing & Trading Post Site	Foot of Riverside Avenue (Mehrhof Lane)	Little Ferry
7	Jared De Peyster House	17 Riverside Avenue (Mehrhof Lane)	Little Ferry
8	J. De Peyster Stagg House	21 Riverside Avenue (Mehrhof Lane)	Little Ferry
9	(unnamed)	37 Riverside Avenue (Mehrhof Lane)	Little Ferry
10	(unnamed)	41 Treptow St. corner Washington Ave.	Little Ferry
11	Roika House	113 Washington Avenue	Little Ferry
12	(unnamed)	141 Washington Avenue	Little Ferry
13	(unnamed)	113 Mehrhof Road	Little Ferry
14	(unnamed)	34 Lafayette Street	Little Ferry
15	(unnamed)	16 Lincoln Street	Little Ferry
16	(unnamed)	26 Lincoln Street	Little Ferry
17	(unnamed)	30 Lincoln Street	Little Ferry
18	(unnamed)	22 Dietrichs Street	Little Ferry
19	Inactive Railroad Track Bridge	New Jersey Transit Harrison Branch Over NJ7	Kearny
20	Bridge for East Bound NJ 3	NJ 3 East Bound Over Hackensack/Grace St.	Little Ferry
21	Clay Pits of Brick Making Industry		
21	Airport Tower & Hanger, 1945 (now Aviation Hall of Fame & Museum)		
22	Atlantic Aircraft Factory, 1930's	Teterboro Airport Near Industrial Avenue	Teterboro
23	Bendix Factory Complex	Teterboro Airport Near Industrial Avenue	Teterboro
24	(unnamed)	US Route 46 & Industrial Avenue	Teterboro
25	Viaduct, 6-lane divided highway	NJ 3 Over Berry's Creek	North Arlington
26	2-lane collector road and sidewalls		East Rutherford
27	Public Service Gas and Electric Company	57-31 Charlotte Avenue	Ridgefield Jersey City

FIGURE 9.1 (Continued) Historic Resources in the Meadowlands District			
28	(unnamed)	18-20a Lewis Avenue	Jersey City
29	Jacob Stouff Property	32 Lewis Avenue	Jersey City
30	Peoples Gas and Light Company	444-500 St. Pauls Avenue	Jersey City
31	Public Service Energy and Gas Corp.	460-468 St. Pauls Avenue	Jersey City
32	(unnamed)	472-518 St. Pauls Avenue	Jersey City
33	(193) Kingsland Tunnel	Newark Ave. & Orient Way	Lyndhurst
34	Covert/Larch Historic District		Jersey City
35	Portal Bridge, Pennsylvania, New Jersey and New York Railroad Co.	Northeast Corridor Rail Line across Hackensack R.	Kearny
36	Erie Marion Main Line Historic District		Jersey City
37	West End Interlocking Tower		Jersey City
38	Portal Tower		Secaucus
39	HX Drawbridge Bergen County Line		E. Ruth./Secaucus
40	Pulaski Skyway/U.S. Routes 1 & 9		Jersey City
41	Lower Hack\ Draw Bridge		Jersey City
42	Old Main Line of the Delaware, Lackawanna & Western Rail Road Historic District	NJ Transit Morristown Line, Milepost 2.52 thru 2.64	
43	Hudson Tower		Jersey City
44	(unnamed)		Kearny
			Kearny

FIGURE 9.2 (right)

The Pennsylvania, New Jersey and New York Railroad Co. Portal Bridge along the Northeast Corridor Railroad line in an undated photo, looking south towards the Pulaski Skyway. The swing bridge is open to permit the passage of a barge, pushed by a tugboat.



FIGURE 9.3 (left) A 1930 view of the former Paterson Plank Road swing bridge crossing Berry's Creek, with people swimming on the south side. The adjoining plank roadway, built about 1856, had already been replaced. About 15 miles in length, Paterson Plank Road was the longest plank road ever built in New Jersey. The wood planks came from the cedar forests that once covered significant areas of the Meadowlands.

FIGURE 9.4

(right) *The People's Gas Light Company/ Public Service Electric & Gas Company Marion Office Historic District in Jersey City. The oldest portion was erected in 1870.*



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Erie Marion Main Line Historic District (No. 36)

Jersey City

SHPO determined eligible: 3/10/99

Significance: This historic district has served as a critical transportation route over the years. The Paterson & Hudson River Railroad was incorporated in 1831 to connect Paterson and Jersey City. In Jersey City, the railroad was designed to link with the New Jersey Railroad, where it could utilize the New Jersey Railroad's planned route through the Bergen Ridge. The Paterson & Hudson River Railroad was completed between Paterson and the New Jersey Railroad in 1833, and the New Jersey Railroad's Bergen Cut completed several years later, in 1838. The New York & Erie Railroad was incorporated in New Jersey in 1853 and leased the Paterson & Hudson River Railroad, using it and other lines to provide access to the New York Harbor. The Long Dock Company was incorporated in 1856 to develop the New York & Erie waterfront terminal facility in Jersey City. By 1861, Long Dock had completed the Pavonia Terminal, the Erie Tunnel (two tracks), and a new rail line to the terminal. The capacity of the line was substantially expanded with the completion of the Bergen Archways in 1908, which provided an additional route through the Bergen Ridge to the waterfront terminal.

Covert/Larch Historic District (No. 34)

Jersey City

SHPO determined eligible: 3/10/99

Significance: This residential district is bounded to the north by a large parking lot and further by the Delaware, Lackawanna, & Western Railroad; to the east by the entrance ramp to the Pulaski Skyway; to the south by St. Paul's Avenue; and to the west by the New York, Susquehanna & Western Railroad. The district is a good example of Jersey City's early, working class neighborhoods. It reflects the successive shifts in ethnic composition and the resettlement patterns that occurred in this area of the country from the mid-19th century through the early 20th century. The dwellings are largely intact and stand as resources representing the historic activities that have taken place therein, exemplifying the development of a small, ethnically-based community in Hudson County.

People's Gas Light Company/Public Service Electric & Gas Company Marion Office Historic District, 444-468 St. Paul's Avenue, Jersey City (No.'s 30 and 31)

SHPO determined eligible: 3/10/99

Significance: This historic district is the only remaining physical element of what was once one of the thriving industries of the Marion section of Jersey City. It includes two structures: the PSE&G Garage, constructed circa 1919-1928, and the People's Gas Light Company/PSE&G Office/Meter Shop, the oldest portion of which was erected in 1870. The district retains integrity of location, design, materials, and association. The buildings remain the property of Public Service Electric & Gas Company.

Pulaski Skyway (No. 40)

US Routes 1 & 9, Jersey City

SHPO determined eligible: 8/04/83

Significance: The opening of the Holland Tunnel in 1927 increased the volume of traffic in the area considerably. Consequently, New Jersey officials were concerned about reliance on the

existing highways and delays due to open drawbridges. Engineering studies resulted in this three-mile steel viaduct, cutting across the Meadowlands marshes and passing 135 feet above the Hackensack and Passaic Rivers. The Skyway is one of America's pioneer elevated expressways, called the longest high-level viaduct in the world when completed in 1932. Costing \$21 million, it was also the most expensive highway facility at that time. Its completion was hailed by the New York Times as "the outstanding highway engineering achievement in history." Shortly after its opening, the bridge was officially designated the Pulaski Skyway in honor of General Casimir Pulaski, Polish hero of the American Revolution.

US Routes 1 & 9 Historic District (No. 40)

Jersey City

SHPO determined eligible: 3/22/92 & 3/8/96

Significance: The 13.2-mile highway, of which 6.25 miles is in the eligible historic district, is one of the nation's pioneer elevated expressways. When US Routes 1 & 9 were under construction, only two percent of all roads in the United States were hard surfaced, all-weather roads. At the time of its completion in 1932, the highway was the single largest highway construction project undertaken in the United States. The project marked the first time that public time-saving was used to justify significant capital costs. It also appears to be the first time that basic predictive formulae for assessing future traffic loads were applied to a highway construction project. At the time of its eligibility determination in 1996, SHPO reported that the district "retains integrity of location, design, setting, material, workmanship, feeling, and association."

Old Main Line Delaware (No. 42)

Lackawanna & Western Rail Road Historic District, Jersey City

SHPO determined eligible: 9/24/96

Significance: The Delaware, Lackawanna and Western Rail Road was chartered in 1815. Old Main Delaware is associated with suburbanization, commuter and passenger traffic, freight traffic, engineering and architecture. Initially chartered in 1815, the DL&W was made to transport anthracite coal in Pennsylvania's Lackawanna Valley. Eventually, the DL&W's service area grew as far east as Hoboken, bringing the Pennsylvania coal fields and iron ore mining to eastern markets. With the connection between the DL&W and the ferries at Hoboken, one could live in the country while maintaining easy access to New York City. The DL&W set standards for passenger service and safety by which other lines were judged. In 1901, the DL&W became the first railroad to adopt the telephone for train dispatching, replacing the telegraph. For suburban stations, the DL&W developed a fairly standard design, a low, rectangular-hopped roof structure with an open loggia at one or both ends supported on piers.

Lower Hack Draw Bridge, NJ Transit Morristown Line (No. 41)

Milepost 2.52 through 2.64 (Over the Hackensack River), Jersey City/Kearny

SHPO determined eligible: 9/18/96

Significance: The bridge is individually eligible and a contributing feature of the Old Main Delaware Lackawanna and Western Railroad Historic District.

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West End Interlocking Tower ((No. 37)

Milepost 2.10 NJ Transit, east of West End Avenue, Jersey City

SHPO determined eligible: 1/20/99

Significance: Control towers and their interlockings were once a common feature along rail lines. An interlocking device is a combination of signals, derails, locks and switches, controlled from a central tower and connected to make it physically impossible for the operation to promote a collision of trains on opposing routes. If an engineer fails to obey a signal, the engine or a portion of his or her train will derail, but collisions of engines or trains on opposing lines are avoided.

SHPO has identified railroad interlocking towers as a “significant and increasingly endangered historic property type.” West End is individually eligible and a contributing feature of the Old Main Delaware Lackawanna and Western Railroad Historic District. The structure has unique architectural qualities and embodies the DL&W’s early use of concrete.

Hudson Tower ((No. 43)

Kearny

SHPO determined eligible: 2/6/97

Significance: Hudson Tower is an early twentieth century railroad signal tower. It represents the use of the “automatic safety principle” to railroad operations to increase reliability and efficiency. Hudson Tower, Portal Tower (below) and three other interlocking towers in New Jersey formed what was possibly the largest system of interlockings in the country at the time, representing major advances in railroad technology. Hudson Tower is also the last remaining element of the former Manhattan Transfer Station, the point at which the Pennsylvania’s steam locomotives were replaced with electric locomotives for the final leg through the tunnel into New York Penn Station. This helped demonstrate the feasibility of electric traction technology.

Pennsylvania, New Jersey and New York Railroad Co. Portal Bridge (No. 35)

Northeast Corridor Railroad Line across the Hackensack River, Jersey City/Secaucus

SHPO determined eligible: 1/18/78

State Register: 2/22/82

Significance: At the turn of the twentieth century, the railroad system stopped at the New Jersey waterfront. Barge and ferry transportation were necessary to transport freight and passengers across the Hudson into New York City. In 1901, the Pennsylvania Railroad announced plans to build Pennsylvania Station in mid-town Manhattan, electrify the system, and develop rail lines running from Newark, over the marshes of the meadowlands, and through tunnels under the Hudson River to New York. The resulting eight-mile rail line is part of the Northeast Corridor, an integral part of the nation’s mass transit rail system. Several bridges had to be built to carry the train line over rivers, creeks, and other railroad lines. The largest of these bridges was the Portal Bridge, constructed in 1907. The Portal Bridge is the only remaining center bearing swing bridge of three constructed on the Northeast Corridor rail line. It is representative of the improved bridge technology developed by engineers for American railroads in the early twentieth century.

Portal Tower, Amtrak Northeast Corridor Line (No. 38)**Milepost 6.00, Secaucus**

SHPO determined eligible: 2/6/97

Significance: This tower serves as an intact example of an early twentieth century railroad signal tower, representing the use of the “automatic safety principle” to railroad operations to increase reliability and efficiency. Portal Tower is also a contributing resource to Portal Bridge.

Among the District’s other historic resources, several of which are named by the sources cited on page 9-2 and included in the figure and map, are the following:

The **Snake Hill** area covers 152 acres in Secaucus, bordering the east bank of the Hackensack River. The site was used as an encampment and lookout during the Revolutionary War and served as the location for various public institutions from the Civil War era to the beginning of the 20th century: in 1863, the site of the area’s first alms house; in 1870, a penitentiary; in 1873, an asylum for the insane, and in 1910 a new alms house and a school. Rock quarried from Snake Hill was used to form the embankments of the railroads that traversed the Meadowlands. In the 1890’s, an advertising agent passing by Snake Hill in a passenger train was inspired by the outcropping hill of rock. Soon photographs of the Rock of Gibraltar, which had a similar profile, were being used in advertisements for the Prudential Insurance Company of America. The image of the rock remains synonymous with Prudential to this day. In 1962, a contract was awarded for the demolition of Snake Hill to the height of ten feet above sea level. Most of the rock blasting was completed; only a portion remains. Since the early 1900’s the area has more commonly been referred to as Laurel Hill. Additional historical information regarding this area is included in Chapter 2, along with a photo appearing in Figure 2.3.

Besides Snake Hill, surveys have identified the 17th century Ferry Landing and Trading House Site at the foot of Riverside Avenue and the 19th century clay pits for brick making in Little Ferry (Resource No.’s 6 and 21, respectively). In Lyndhurst, the Bergen County Historic Sites Survey listed the ruins of the 1916 Canadian Car and Foundry Co. and the 1906 Kingsland Railroad Repair Shop, southeast of the intersection of Valley Brook Avenue and Orient Way (Resources No’s 2 and 3, respectively). With grant assistance from the NJMC, the Lyndhurst Historic Preservation Commission is preparing an application to the US Department of Interior to place the Canadian Car and Foundry Co. on the National Register of Historic Places. Teterboro sites include the Teterboro Airport Tower and Aviation Hall of Fame and Museum (See photo included as Figure 7.9 in Chapter 7.), the 1930’s Atlantic Aircraft Factory, and the 1937 Bendix Corporation complex (Resource No.’s 21—23). The Jersey City, Hoboken and Rutherford Electric Railway Co. car barn was located on Route 153 opposite 5th Street in Secaucus. In East Rutherford, a ferry dock and an exposed portion of the Paterson Plank Road have been identified where the road meets the western shore of the Hackensack River.

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KEY CONDITIONS

The Meadowlands District has a unique historic and archaeological heritage.

- This heritage is well documented by several comprehensive studies, as well as the State Historic Preservation Office's review of individual sites.
- The significance of several historic resources in the District stems from their major contributions to the history of transportation during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

SOURCES

County of Bergen, Bergen County Historic Sites Survey, 1980, 1981

County of Hudson, 2002 Master Plan, 2002

Facciolla, Nicholas; "History of Snake Hill," Meadowlands/USA, 1980

Grossman and Associates, Inc.; Stage 1A Archeological and Historical Sensitivity Evaluation of the Hackensack Meadowlands, New Jersey; EPA Contract No. D102182QZ; June 15, 1992

Grossman and Associates, Inc.; Hackensack Meadowlands Archeological and Historical Sensitivity and Impact Evaluation; Volumes I and II; August 15, 1994

New Jersey State Historic Preservation Office, SHPO eligibility determinations:

HX Drawbridge, Milepost 5.48, Bergen County Line, 4/2/1992

Erie Marion Main Line Historic District, 3/10/1999

Covert/Larch Historic District, 3/10/1999

People's Gas Light Company/Public Service Electric & Gas Company Marion Office Historic District, 3/10/1999

Pulaski Skyway, US Routes 1 & 9, 8/04/1983

US Routes 1 & 9 Historic District, 3/22/1992 and 3/8/1996

Old Main Delaware, Lackawanna & Western Rail Road Historic District, 9/24/1996

Lower Hack Draw Bridge, NJ Transit Morristown Line, Milepost 2.52 through 2.64, 9/18/1996

West End Interlocking Tower, Milepost 2.10 NJ Transit, east of West End Avenue, 1/20/1999

Hudson Tower, 2/6/1997

Pennsylvania, New Jersey and New York Railroad Co. Portal Bridge, on the Northeast Corridor Railroad Line across the Hackensack River, 1/18/1978

Portal Tower, Amtrak Northeast Corridor Line, Milepost 6.00, 2/6/1997

Railspot, <<http://www.railspot.com/interlockers/history.htm>>

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